



Congressman Bill Thomas

22nd District, California

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Thomas Announces Federal Funding for Valley Fever Vaccine Research

Congressman Bill Thomas announced today that the Valley Fever Vaccine Project, which is based at California State University, Bakersfield, will receive \$180,000 in federal funding for its ongoing research in pursuit of a vaccine. The funding, which will come from the budget of the Health Resources and Services Administration, was included at Thomas' request in the conference report, or final version, of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005.

The funding will be used to purchase an analytical centrifuge, which will assist researchers in the development of a vaccine.

To date this year, there have been over 800 cases of Valley Fever diagnosed in Kern County, and nine deaths have been attributed to the disease. Past cases of Valley Fever have also been found in other regions of California, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico and Texas.

"I was pleased to support the Vaccine Project's request for funds to purchase the centrifuge, and to continue to support their efforts to combat this multi-state health concern," Thomas said. "The community and Rotary groups who have helped raise money, the scientists conducting the research, and state and local officials -- we all want to work to reduce the number of Valley Fever cases, and to do that we need to continue research related to the development of a vaccine. The research conducted with the assistance of the centrifuge will allow that work to continue moving forward."

The importance of developing a vaccine for Valley Fever took on an added dimension after the 2001 anthrax attacks. Valley Fever is spread through a fungus, *Coccidioides immitis*, the only fungus listed on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Select Agent list of bio-terrorism agents. Similar to the anthrax bacteria, this fungus is a natural soil-borne organism that can be reduced into particulate matter and dispersed into the air.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005 passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 344-51. It will now be sent to the Senate for consideration, and if approved, to President Bush for his signature.

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